

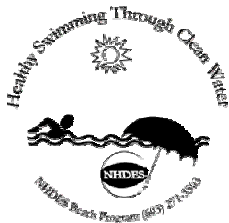
# Seabrook Town Beach, Seabrook

## BEACH WATER QUALITY REPORT

### SUMMER 2006



April 2007  
Prepared by: Emily Bouthiette  
Sara Sumner



## **BACKGROUND**

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has operated a Public Beach Inspection Program, or Beach Program, for over 20 years. An established coastal beach monitoring program began in 1989 and the program continues to provide monitoring on a weekly basis. DES recognizes the health threat at public beaches. As a result, increased beach monitoring and bacteria source tracking have been implemented to further protect public health.

Coastal beaches are monitored for the presence of the fecal bacteria *Enterococci*. These fecal bacteria are present in the intestines of warm-blooded animals including humans. Fecal bacteria, when present in high concentrations and ingested, can commonly cause gastrointestinal illnesses such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. They are also known as indicator organisms, meaning their presence in water may indicate the presence of other potentially pathogenic organisms.

In October of 2000, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed into law the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act. The BEACH Act is an amendment to the Clean Water Act, which authorizes the EPA to award grants to eligible states. The purpose of the BEACH Act is to reduce the risk of disease to users of the nation's recreational waters. BEACH Act grants provide support for development and implementation of monitoring and notification programs that help protect the public from exposure to pathogenic microorganisms in coastal recreation waters.

DES received grant funding in 2002 to develop and implement a beach monitoring and notification program consistent with EPA's performance criteria requirements published in the *National Beach Guidance and Required Performance Criteria for Grants* document ([www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/grants](http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/grants)). DES has successfully met all requirements and continues to expand the monitoring and notification program. In 2002, only nine coastal beaches were monitored, while in 2003 and 2004, 15 and 16 beaches respectively, were monitored on a routine basis. Fifteen beaches were sampled again in 2005 and 2006. In 2004, volunteers sampled Star Island beach, but circumstances did not allow for this cooperative effort in 2005 and 2006.

## **Table of Contents**

Beach Description .....	4
Tier Status and Sampling Frequency .....	6
Water Quality .....	7
Areas of Concern .....	9
Thoughts for the Future .....	10

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Seabrook Town Beach Access Points .....	4
Figure 2. Map of Seabrook Town Beach .....	6
Figure 3. Seabrook Town Beach Enterococci Data 2006 .....	9

## **List of Tables**

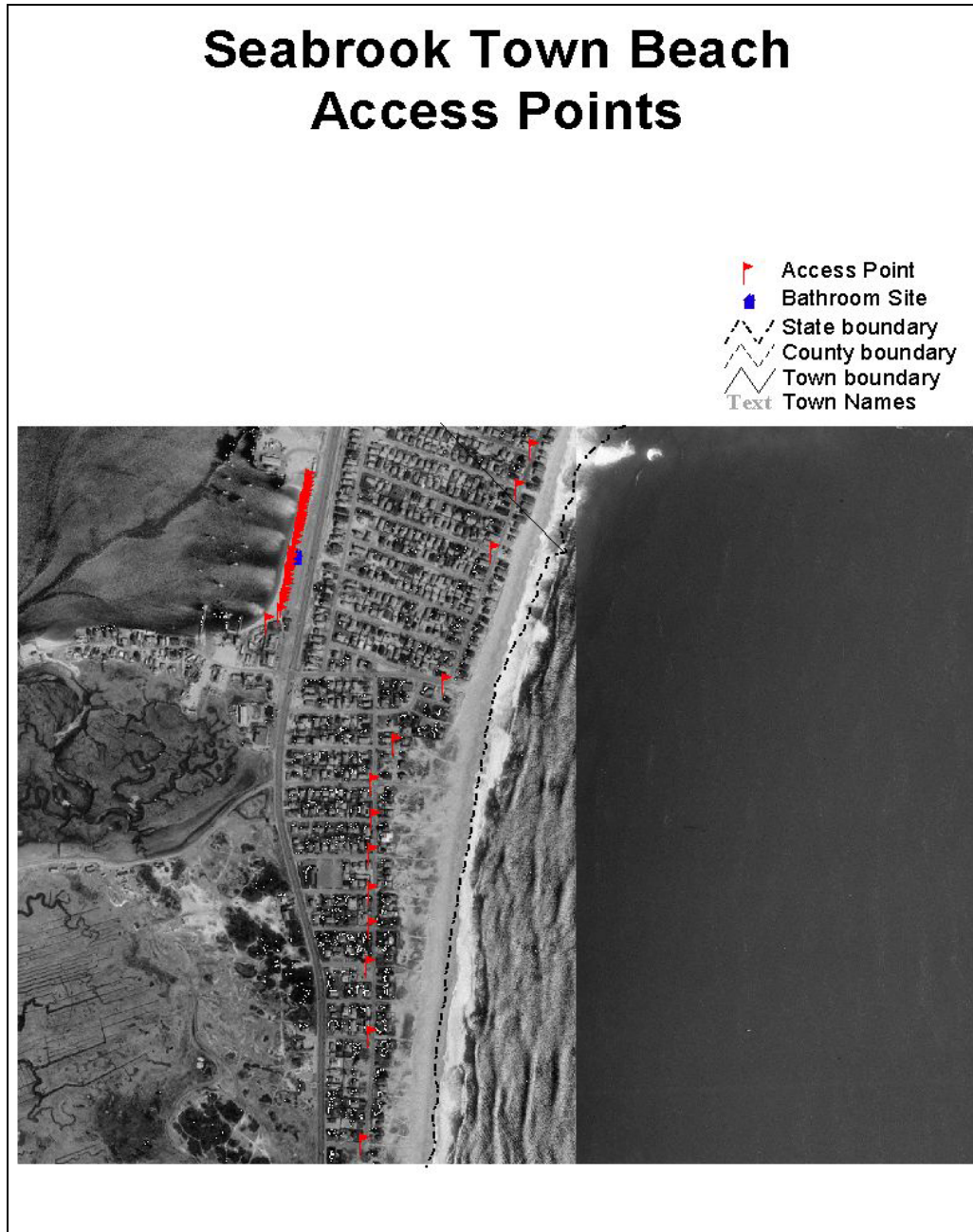
Table 1. Station Description .....	5
Table 2. Seabrook Town Beach Enterococci Data 2006 .....	8

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Special Topic 2006.....	11
-------------------------------------	----

## Beach Description

Seabrook Town Beach is owned and maintained by the town of Seabrook, New Hampshire. The beach is comprised of soft sand with numerous sand dunes that are home to nesting avian species. Its total length is 5,018 feet as it stretches from the Massachusetts border north to Sun Valley Beach. The beach is frequently used by residents and vacationers for various recreational activities. There are 15 main access points to Seabrook Beach from the neighborhood and parking areas (Figure 1). Parking in most areas is only for town residents with a permit. Lifeguards are not present and sanitary facilities are not available during the beach season.



**Figure 1. Seabrook Town Beach Access Points**

A small number of gulls are the waterfowl most commonly observed at the beach. Beach inspectors have also noted that the sand dunes are home to nesting pairs of Piping Plovers. Although dogs have been noted on the beach by inspectors, the town restricts animals from the beach area. The persistence of animals on the beach may result in contamination of the waters by fecal matter.

Below is a brief description of the sampling stations at Seabrook Town Beach, Seabrook. The stations are pictured in Figure 2.

**Table 1. Station Descriptions**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
<b>Right sample station:</b> located off Route 1A at the end of New Hampshire Street. Parking is at the end of the road and access to the beach is a sandy path between two houses.	42° 52' 22.606"	-70° 48' 58.3179"
<b>Center sample station:</b> located at the end of Dracut Street off Route 1A. Parking is at the end of the road and access to the beach is via a public boardwalk.	42° 52' 54.3501"	-70° 48' 54.0304"
<b>Left sample station:</b> located at the end of Hooksett Street off Route 1A. There is a wide entrance to the beach with a boardwalk. Parking is on the road.	42° 53' 10.8826"	-70° 48' 50.2807"



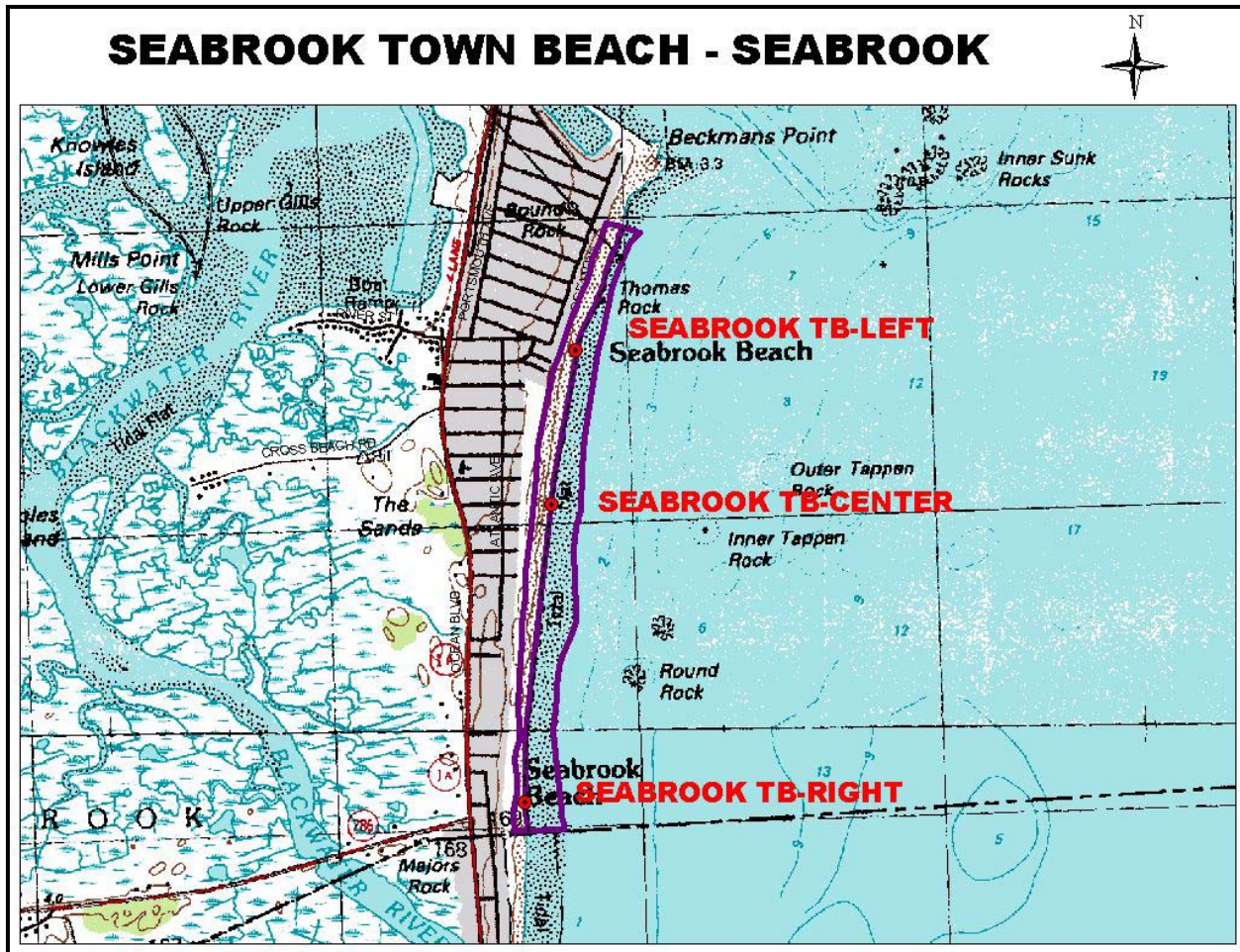


Figure 2. Map of Seabrook Town Beach Sample Stations

### Tier Status and Sampling Frequency

The Beach Program developed a risk-based beach evaluation process and tiered monitoring approach and implemented this approach during the 2003 beach season. Beach evaluations are conducted annually to determine potential health threats to the public. Evaluations are based on several criteria in three main categories: beach history, microbial pathogen sources, and beach use. The evaluations for the 2006 season included a new criterion to assess beaches. Beaches are now assessed as impaired for bacteria. Impairments are based the most recent version of the Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM) submitted to EPA by DES every two years. The CALM assesses beach units as impaired based on historical exceedances of both the single sample and geometric mean bacteria standards.

Based on these criteria, beaches were assigned a Tier I-Impaired, Tier I or Tier II status in 2006. Tier I-Impaired beaches are high priority and have an increased potential to affect public health, Tier I are medium priority, while Tier II are low priority beaches that have less potential to affect public health. Beach sample frequency is based on the Tier statuses; Tier I-Impaired beaches

were sampled twice per week, Tier I beaches were sampled once per week, and Tier II beaches were sampled once every other week in 2006.

Seabrook Town Beach was categorized as a Tier I beach based on the Beach Program's Risk-Based Evaluation ranking system. This ranking indicates that the beach is frequently used by the public and potential pollution sources exist that may negatively affect public health. The Seabrook Town Beach Tier I ranking has not changed since the ranking system was implemented in 2002. Because Seabrook Town Beach is a Tier I beach, it is sampled once per week.

## **Water Quality**

Beaches are monitored to ensure compliance with State Water Quality Standards. Marine waters are analyzed for the presence of the fecal bacteria *Enterococci*. *Enterococci* are known as indicator organisms, meaning their presence may indicate the presence of other pathogenic organisms. The state standard for *Enterococci* at public beaches is 104 counts/100 mL in one sample, or a geometric mean of 35 counts/100 mL in three samples collected over 60 days. Standard exceedances require the issuance and posting of a beach advisory. Beach advisories remain in effect until subsequent beach sampling indicates safe water quality conditions.

The number of samples collected at each beach is a function of beach length. Beaches less than 100 feet in length are sampled at left and right locations 1/3 of the distance from either end of the beach. Beaches greater than 100 feet in length are bracketed into thirds and sampled at left, center and right locations. Routine sample collection may be enhanced by sampling known or suspected pollution sources to the beach area. Storm event sampling may be conducted at beaches where wet-weather events are expected to affect beach water quality.

The 2006 season's weather can best be described as unpredictable. The 2006 sampling season began May 30. During the month of May, New Hampshire experienced flood conditions typical of a 100-year flood, while the months of June and July were wetter and warmer than normal, and August was unseasonably cool and dry. May had over 17 inches of rain setting a record high for the month, and over eight inches of rain fell during June (as recorded at Pease International Tradeport, Portsmouth, N.H.). Precipitation was recorded on 34 days of the 95 day sampling season. Twenty-two beach days (beach hours 9:00a.m to 5:00p.m) were directly affected by precipitation. There were a total of 13 routine inspections performed and 39 samples collected in 2006.

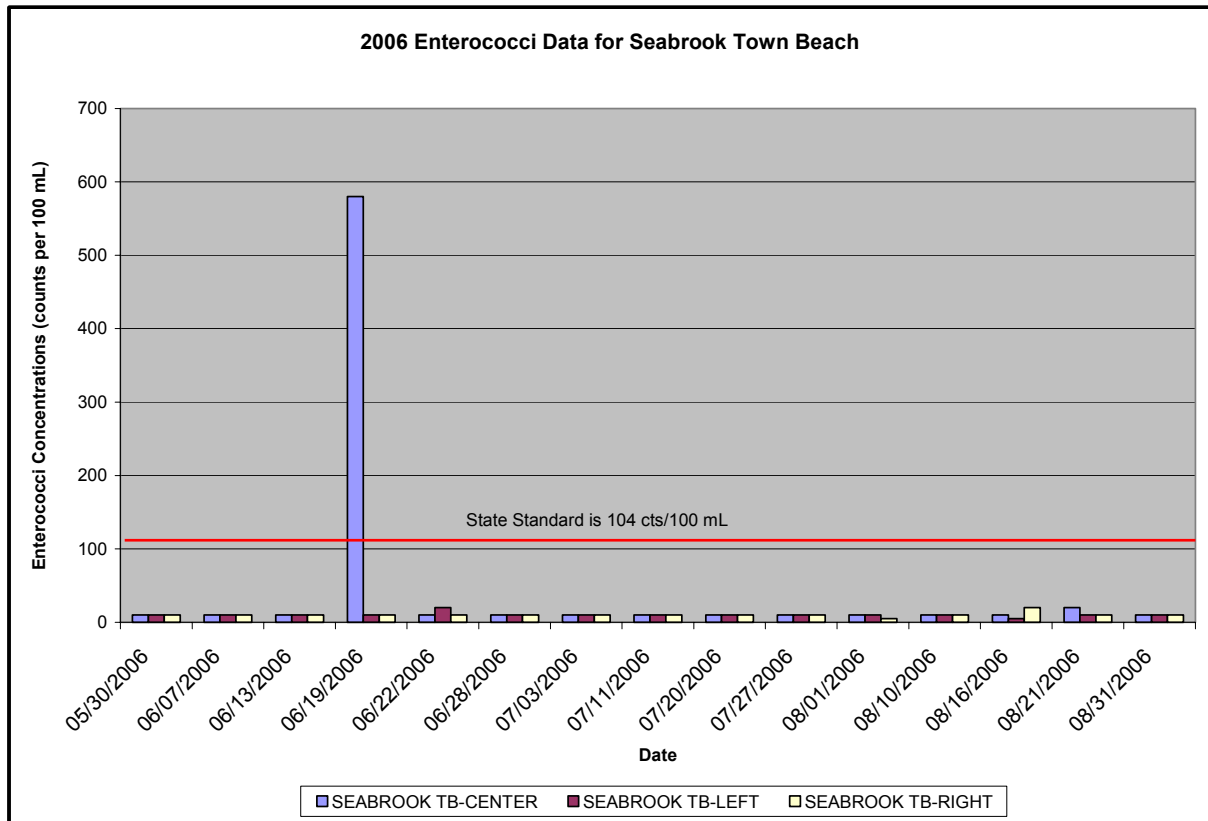
Table 2 includes the *Enterococci* data from each sampling event in 2006. Overall, the summer 2006 *Enterococci* levels were very low and within the state's standards for public beaches (Figure 3). Although there was no known reason for an *Enterococci* spike, the center station was elevated above the state standard on June 19. Waterfowl in the immediate vicinity or potential cross contamination of the sample are possible reasons for increased *Enterococci*. No advisory was issued, and subsequent *Enterococci* levels were within the state standards for designated public beaches

**Table 2. Seabrook Town Beach Enterococci Data 2006**

<b>Sample Date</b>	<b>Station Name</b>	<b>Enterococci Results (counts per 100 mL)</b>
5/30/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
6/7/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
6/13/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
6/19/2006	Left	10
	Center	580
	Right	10
6/22/2006	Left	20
	Center	10
	Right	10
6/28/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
7/3/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
7/11/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
7/20/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
7/27/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
8/1/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	5
8/10/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10
8/16/2006	Left	5
	Center	10
	Right	20
8/21/2006	Left	10
	Center	20
	Right	10
8/31/2006	Left	10
	Center	10
	Right	10



Figure 3 depicts the relationship between Enterococci data at Seabrook Town Beach and the state standard for coastal beaches. All Enterococci results were well below the state standard for designated public beaches.



**Figure 3. Seabrook Town Beach Enterococci Data 2006**

### Areas of Concern

The Seabrook Waste Water Treatment Plant outfall will always pose a potential health risk to beach waters. Fortunately, protocols are in place in the event of system failure, and historical data indicate no negative beach impacts from the outfall.

The persistence of animals on the beach may result in contamination of the waters by fecal matter. Although dogs are prohibited from the beach, dog walkers are observed during the summer months. As long as pet wastes are cleaned up from the beach area, there should be no water quality concerns. These wastes have the potential to increase bacteria concentrations in swimming areas. Young children may potentially be at risk if they come into contact with feces while playing in the sand.

## Thoughts for the Future

- The town of Seabrook and the Beach Management Committee should place dog waste stations at all beach entrances. The stations provide pet waste bags to pick up the wastes as well as signage informing the public that picking up pet waste is an important step in keeping the beach free of bacteria.
- Kiosks are recommended for more popular beach entrances. Please contact the Beach Program for assistance in purchasing and maintaining kiosks to keep the public informed.
- Seabrook Town Beach is nearly one mile in length and three sample stations may not be sufficient to protect public health. DES recommends adding two additional stations between the right and center stations and the center and left stations.
- The Seabrook Beach Committee, local businesses, or school group should join DES's Adopt-a-Beach Program. The program would consist of beach clean-ups and water quality monitoring. DES would conduct training sessions and participate in education and outreach activities for the community. If you are interested, please contact Alicia Carlson at (603) 271-0698 or [acarlson@des.state.nh.us](mailto:acarlson@des.state.nh.us).
- The town of Seabrook and the Beach Management Committee have done an excellent job protecting Seabrook Beach. We applaud you for your diligent efforts in maintaining a safe and healthy environment for the public to enjoy.

## **Appendix A**

### **Special Topic 2006**

## Rapid Assessment Methodology for the Detection of Microbiological Indicators

To assess beach water quality, the Department of Environmental Services (DES) monitors fecal indicator bacteria levels at coastal beaches on a routine basis. Unfortunately, results from sample analysis can take anywhere from 24 to 48 hours. Because it takes at least 24 hours to receive results, beach managers and the public are not informed of water quality problems until after the public may have been exposed. This is an issue facing beach officials throughout the world, and is a priority of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA,



universities and private entities are researching rapid assessment methods to enumerate bacteria and viruses. These methods will allow beach officials to post advisories on the same day water quality is impaired, thus, better protecting public health. There are three different rapid assessment method technologies available: Molecular surface recognition, nucleic acid detection and enzyme/substrate based methods. All rapid assessment methods will take less than two hours to obtain results.

Molecular surface recognition methods capture and/or label the target bacterium by binding to molecular structures on the exterior surface or in its genetic material. Analyses of coastal beach water samples currently employ culture-based methods for the detection of Enterococci bacteria, an indicator for fecal pollution in marine water. The quickest culture-based method takes up to 24 hours to provide results. Now, a new method is being developed to enumerate Enterococci. This new method uses Transcription-Mediated Amplification (TMA) with a fluorescently-labeled probe to amplify a specific region of Enterococci ribosomal RNA (rRNA).

The TMA rapid assessment method is currently being tested in Southern California. Method development is moving quickly and will likely come to execution within five years. Method cost is a significant reason the new technology is not currently employed. Once this procedure is widely and routinely accepted, the expenses should lower. This rapid assessment method is very beneficial as it will allow beach managers to take immediate action towards protecting the public from waterborne pathogen exposure on the same day water is sampled.

Another rapid assessment method being developed for fecal indicator detection is Quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (QPCR). QPCR is a nucleic acid detection method that targets genetic material of bacteria, viruses or protozoan indicators. QPCR is used to test for both *E. coli* and Enterococci. Results can be obtained from this method on an average of two hours after sampling. This method has demonstrated 85-90 percent agreement with existing routine methods. QPCR can be used to detect other water quality indicators such as *Bacteroides*

*thetaitamicron* and human enterovirus. Studies indicate that ratios of *B. thetaitamicron* may provide useful information as to fecal contamination sources.

The final rapid assessment technology methods available are the enzyme/substrate based methods. These methods pair chromogenic or fluorogenic substrate methods already widely used with advanced optical or electrical detectors. These methods are directed at reducing the incubation periods of current membrane filtration methods. Some of these methods measure excitation and absorbance of the fluorescent metabolite of Enterococci using a fluorometer to speed the detection rate. A popular type of enzyme/substrate method is the Dual-Wavelength Fluorimetry (DWF).

These rapid assessments methods are currently being tested for accuracy, sensitivity and efficiency. Research indicates that these new methods will be made available within the next five years. Once these technologies are made available and laboratories adopt the methods, beach management will have a new tool to better protect public health. With assistance from EPA Beach Grants, New Hampshire will be proactive in employing accepted methods.